

*President's Special Conference with the
American Society of Newspaper Editors*

Harry S. Truman, 1946

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we get through with it, I think we will have an organization that will work satisfactorily for the national defense of the country.

You know, what we are trying to do—what I am trying to do is set up an organization on the experience that we have had in the greatest war in history, so that that organization will be ready to operate in case of an emergency—which we hope will never come—and so that we will not have to feel around and organize a dozen different production programs, and a dozen different ideas before we actually are ready to operate.

God blessed us with the greatest set of military leaders that any country in the world ever had, in this instance; and also, gave us 2 years in which to get ready. That will not happen again.

[3.] Q. Mr. President, in view of what you just said, I wonder about the—what you think of the Central Intelligence Group, which does not seem to include the FBI?

THE PRESIDENT. But it does.

Q. It does?

THE PRESIDENT. Yes, it does. And the FBI is furnishing a great deal of the intelligence to the present Central Intelligence Group.

Q. To some of us it seemed that that was a natural nucleus for it.

THE PRESIDENT. Well, you want to be very careful in any of these things. What we have to guard against is a Gestapo, in this instance, and a military dictatorship, in the setting up of a national defense program. You must always be careful to keep that under civilian control, and under the control of officers who are elected by the people. Then you won't have any trouble in the future.

I have got no business giving you a lecture on free government, however. [Laughter]

[Pause]

Are you out of questions this early in the game? [Laughter]

[4.] Q. Mr. President, is the need for food throughout the world, to avoid starvation, as great as it has been pictured?

THE PRESIDENT. It's greater. You can't imagine how acute that situation is. Mr. Hoover will report to me and the country tomorrow over the radio at 7 o'clock—tomorrow evening. And he has made a complete survey of Europe, and he is on his way to Asia now, to see what the situation is over there.

It hasn't been painted nearly as bad as it is. I wish I could send each one of you to Greece and to Poland, and to—to Norway and to India, and to China and to the Philippines. I wish you could see just exactly what the situation is, and just talk with the commanders of the occupied zones which are our responsibility. It hasn't been painted any darker than it really is.

Q. Mr. President, aren't we falling down on getting supplies and shipping them?

THE PRESIDENT. To some extent, yes we are. And that is due to the situation that has developed as a result of anticipated higher prices by people who hold the materials in first hand.

Q. Mr. President, are we going to be able to organize and function fast enough to really save millions of lives as we should?

THE PRESIDENT. I hope we are. We are doing everything that is humanly possible to accomplish the purpose.

Q. It looks bad, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT. It does look bad. No question about it.

Q. Mr. President, I have never seen any adequate account of what opportunity for self-help there may be in these countries. Some southern countries already should have some kind of crops coming in, unless they are completely lacking in feed and machinery, and that sort of thing.

THE PRESIDENT. There isn't any country